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FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2858  
INFO RUEHPF/AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH PRIORITY 0032  
RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE  
RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY 3060

UNCLAS HO CHI MINH CITY 000733

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [SOCI](#) [CB](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: EXPULSION OF ETHNIC KHMER MONK FROM CAMBODIA

REF: A) PHNOM PENH 905; B) HCMC 520

¶1. (SBU) Post has been seeking to confirm Ref A reporting that an ethnic Khmer monk, Tim Sakhorn, was allegedly forcibly deported from Cambodia to Vietnam. ConGen contacts in An Giang and Soc Trang provinces confirmed that Sakhorn is from Tinh Bien district in An Giang province. Chief Monk Chau Pina of Chi Kaeng pagoda in An Giang province told us on the phone that he had seen Sakhorn at a religious gathering in the province approximately one month earlier, before the date of Sakhorn's alleged forced expulsion from Cambodia. (This was not considered unusual, as Sakhorn apparently traveled back and forth regularly between Cambodia and Vietnam.) The monk did not provide us any other details about Sakhorn. Another ethnic Khmer monk -- Kok Sala of Svay Toong pagoda in Tri Ton district, An Giang province, claimed not to know Sakhorn's whereabouts. However, he reported that he had received instructions from the provincial Religious Police (PA 38) to deny Sakhorn refuge should he appear at his pagoda. Police also handed him a copy of a declaration from the senior-most Khmer monk in Cambodia reportedly declaring Sakhorn to be a "bad element."

¶2. (SBU) Separately, provincial- and district-level officials from the Committee for Religious affairs (CRA) claimed to have no knowledge of Sakhorn or his activities. The provincial official noted, however, that "such sensitive cases are handled by the police."

¶3. (SBU) Comment: The police warning to Khmer monks not to get involved with Sakhorn severely limits our ability to develop information on his case. However, given the police pressure on Khmer monks and the strong hint from the CRA provincial official in An Giang, it is very possible that reports of his forcible deportation to Vietnam are true. The move against Sakhorn would be consistent with a more general GVN effort to deal with those ethnic Khmer -- including a number of other monks defrocked after protests in the Delta in February (Ref B) -- who it believes are challenging Vietnamese sovereignty in the Mekong Delta. End Comment.

SCHWENK